

I. Dynasty 841

Chapter 841

Suwon Bridge.

This was a stone bridge spanning the narrowest section of the Taedong River. According to Goryeo historical records, Suwon Bridge had a long history, dating back three hundred years, as long as the Great Yu Empire's founding.

And because of the obstruction of this great river, there were only two ways to get from Haigucheng to Suwon City: one was by sea, and the other was this Suwon Bridge.

It could be said that this was the only passage for north and south Goryeo.

Upon receiving Xiao Ming's order to drive out the Japanese pirates, Ye Qingyun's first thought was to capture this stone bridge. Otherwise, the army's southward march would be blocked.

"Army Commander, the stone bridge has been occupied by the Japanese pirates. Look."

Qu Dong, Division Commander of the Huben 2nd Army, pointed towards Suwon Bridge. Many Japanese soldiers armed with flintlock guns were patrolling the bridge now.

Ye Qingyun picked up his telescope, observed for a moment, and nodded slightly.

“Army Commander, the secret guard’s intelligence is very clear. The firearms used by the Japanese are only equivalent to the smoothbore flintlock guns we used before. They cannot contend with our Conqueror Muskets at all. Moreover, Japan lacks cavalry and is basically all infantry. In terms of artillery, they are even inferior. With such a disparity, we can boldly attack,” Qu Dong analyzed.

“I think so too. Let’s just seize the bridge directly. There’s no need to be polite with the Japanese pirates,” Ye Qingyun agreed with Qu Dong’s words.

He greatly valued this young general, who had graduated from the Qingzhou Army Academy and performed excellently during the attack on Liaozhou.

He was ashamed of his own inferiority in the application of firearms and military tactics.

Qu Dong nodded upon hearing this. They were still eight li from the stone bridge. A normal march would take half an hour to arrive.

Upon receiving Ye Qingyun’s affirmation, he led a thousand vanguards, breaking away from the main force, and sped towards the stone bridge.

When they were five hundred meters from the stone bridge, the Japanese pirates defending Suwon Bridge recognized them as the Great Yu Empire army. They all shouted out, and the Japanese pirates scattered on Suwon Bridge quickly gathered, forming a horizontal formation at the other end of the bridge, aiming their guns at the Great Yu Empire soldiers walking towards them. At the same time, a cavalryman galloped towards Suwon City.

Qu Dong and his soldiers stopped at the other end of Suwon Bridge, maintaining a distance of one hundred and fifty meters from the Japanese pirates.

At this distance, they could defeat the Japanese pirates' musketeers, while the Japanese pirates' smoothbore flintlock guns posed little threat to them.

"Who are you? What do you want?"

While the two sides were in a stalemate, a Japanese pirate walked to the middle of the bridge and questioned Qu Dong, acting arrogantly.

In Japan, Yamada Nobunaga had been continuously discrediting the Great Yu Empire, calling the Great Yu Empire people an inferior race and proclaiming that the Great Yu Empire people were not worthy of living in the vast Central Plains, even telling his soldiers that it rightfully belonged to Japan.

Because of this propaganda, the Japanese people greatly despised the Great Yu Empire people. Coupled with the one-sided Goryeo war, they became even more arrogant.

Although they continuously suffered defeats in Ryukyu and at sea, they attributed the failures to individuals rather than the fact that they had been collectively left behind by the Great Yu Empire.

"We are soldiers of the Great Yu Empire. We are here to find our lost soldiers. You are to immediately clear the road. We are going to search Suwon City," Qu Dong casually made up an excuse.

"Are you mad? How could there be lost Great Yu Empire soldiers here? Get out of here, or we will show you the power of firearms!"

The Japanese soldier shouted. He had once followed pirates to plunder the Great Yu Empire's coast, so he knew some of the Great Yu Empire's language.

Qu Dong sneered, "Are you deaf? If we don't find our soldiers, we won't return! Have your men clear the road, otherwise I will consider this a declaration of war against the Great Yu Empire!"

The Japanese soldier was startled. Qu Dong's big statement instantly left him somewhat bewildered. Before the barbarians were driven out of Guandong, they had a war plan for Haigucheng.

However, because the barbarians failed too quickly, they shelved this plan and had been waiting for domestic orders while strengthening their occupation of Goryeo.

Now, the appearance of Great Yu Empire soldiers here gave him an ominous premonition. After a moment of hesitation, he immediately ran to the other end of the bridge. Clearly, they would not yield the road.

"Fire!"

Qu Dong then gave the order. A thousand soldiers, arranged in a horizontal line, began firing at the Japanese pirates across the bridge.

"Bang, bang, bang..." Continuous gunshots rang out. Conqueror Muskets spewed white smoke and flames, and the Japanese pirates opposite immediately fell in a row.

At this distance, the Conqueror Musket showed excellent range and accuracy. Almost a quarter of the bullets hit the enemy.

The Japanese pirate army on the other side of the river was stunned. They were waiting for the Great Yu Empire soldiers to approach them, then they would counterattack according to their formation tactics.

However, the Great Yu Empire soldiers clearly violated their accustomed way of war, launching an attack from outside their firearms' range.

"Bang, bang, bang..."

Before the Japanese soldiers could react, another volley erupted from across the bridge, followed by a third.

The continuous firepower caused heavy casualties among the Japanese soldiers, who were arranged in dense formations. Over two hundred men fell from a total of five hundred in an instant.

"Charge! Charge!"

The Japanese samurai commanding the musketeers realized something was wrong and immediately shouted for them to charge into close combat, because if they continued fighting this way, they would be completely wiped out without killing a single enemy.

But just as he shouted, he suddenly felt a warmth in his chest. Looking down, he saw blood continuously gushing out.

Across the bridge, a sharpshooter smiled.

Ever since the sharpshooters in Jinzhou City performed excellently, every division was now equipped with a certain number of sharpshooters to specifically target and kill important enemy figures.

Qu Dong had been observing the battle. He found that even after suffering heavy casualties, the Japanese pirates did not retreat. Instead, the remaining soldiers charged towards them as if they had no fear of death.

“Is this the Japanese pirates’ ‘Banzai’ charge?” Qu Dong frowned.

In Haigucheng, they had encountered many Goryeo generals who always feared fighting the Japanese pirates, because the Japanese pirates were not only formidable with firearms, but even when at a disadvantage, they would not surrender. Instead, they would charge as if committing suicide.

Many times, victories in sight were lost due to the Japanese pirates’ charges. And because the Japanese pirates would shout “Banzai” during their charges, the Goryeo people referred to it as a “Banzai charge.”

“Kill! Leave no one alive!” Qu Dong gave the order coldly.

In the battle with the barbarians, he had reached a conclusion: the more barbaric the fighting style, the more barbaric their counterattack had to be, otherwise, there was no way to force the enemy to submit.

This was true for the barbarians, and now it seemed it was also true for the Japanese pirates.

Under the continuous gunfire, one Japanese soldier fell, and another immediately rushed forward. The distance of one hundred and fifty meters was quickly overcome.

At this point, the remaining dozen or so soldiers drew their samurai swords and slashed at the Great Yu Empire soldiers. However, they underestimated the Great Yu Empire soldiers' hand-to-hand combat ability.

The front-rank Great Yu Empire soldiers raised their bayonets. A swift thrust pierced the Japanese soldier's heart, and the dozen or so Japanese soldiers fell one by one.

Chapter 842

Gunsmoke still lingered on the battlefield. Suwon Bridge was littered with the bodies of Japanese soldiers. Blood stained the bridge deck, flowing through the gaps into the river.

Qu Dong stepped over the corpses of Japanese soldiers and walked onto the bridge. The brutality of war had taught him never to feel mercy for the enemy. Moreover, these Japanese pirates had massacred countless kind common people along the coast.

“Immediately construct defenses to prevent a Japanese pirate counterattack,” Qu Dong issued orders in an orderly fashion. He had learned many wartime skills at the Army Academy.

Twenty minutes later, the remaining seven thousand men, led by Ye Qingyun, arrived at the stone bridge. Besides musketeers, they also had thirty-six cannons with them.

Their real target was Suwon City. Once they captured this city, they would have a bridgehead for attacking other Japanese-occupied cities.

“Excellent, the battle was resolved so quickly,” Ye Qingyun said with a smile. Then he looked at the sky. “It’s almost dark. Suwon City can only be attacked tomorrow. However, we must be careful tonight to prevent Japanese pirates from launching a night raid.”

Qu Dong nodded. This indeed needed to be guarded against. Today’s Japanese banzai charge still had some impact on him.

After a moment of thought, he said, “I will have the soldiers lay some landmines outside the camp as a precaution.”

Ye Qingyun nodded slightly. It had to be said that landmines were indeed a good means of warning.

Turning around, he looked towards Suwon City, which was only twenty li from Suwon Bridge. This was his next target.

At the same time, the reporting cavalry galloped into Suwon City. News of the Great Yu Empire soldiers attacking Suwon Bridge quickly reached Edo Ichiaki’s ears.

“My Lord Flag-Leader, the Great Yu Empire is hostile. Our envoys sent to Jinzhou have not returned; they must have all been captured. They might have interrogated them about our alliance with the barbarians,” Koizumi Junichi said.

Edo Ichiaki frowned deeply. After the Great Yu Empire army defeated the barbarians, he put away his contempt. After all, he was a general and responsible to Lord Yamada.

At the same time, they also obtained the Great Yu Empire’s Conqueror Muskets from the barbarians through merchants. These excellent rifled firearms greatly shocked them.

And what surprised him most was the firing mechanism of this firearm. They simply could not understand this firing method, but it was certain that this method allowed the Great Yu Empire soldiers to fire one or two more times than them.

“We should have allied with the Golden Tent Khanate earlier,” Edo Ichiaki walked to the window, overlooking the scenery within Suwon City.

Inside the city, Goryeo common people were enslaved by them, constantly shuttling back and forth to transport supplies and repair the city for them.

After a pause, he said, “The Great Yu Empire’s firearms have a longer range than ours. If we continue to use three-stage firing, we will suffer greatly. The only way is close combat with them.”

Although he understood the disparity in firearms with the Great Yu Empire, this did not mean they should withdraw from Goryeo.

No one was willing to spit out meat that was already in their mouth. But now, he needed to find a way to defend Suwon City.

“Great Yu Empire soldiers will not engage us in close combat. Perhaps only a sneak attack can get us close to them,” Koizumi Junichi said.

Edo Ichiaki nodded. His thoughts were similar to Koizumi Junichi’s.

As the two were discussing how to prevent the Great Yu Empire army from attacking Suwon City, a soldier suddenly rushed to him and shouted, “My Lord Flag-Leader, Great Yu Empire warships are sailing on the sea!”

“What!” Edo Ichiaki was greatly alarmed. He had an even more ominous premonition than before. “It seems the Great Yu Empire intends to completely drive us out of Goryeo this time. After all, Goryeo is now a vassal state of the Great Yu Empire.”

Koizumi Junichi’s face darkened. “Seventy of our Japanese navy’s Atakabune (warships) are docked at the pier. This is one-fifth of the total number of warships that attacked Goryeo. If they are sunk by the Great Yu Empire, Suwon City’s supplies will be finished.”

Edo Ichiaki naturally understood this principle. His face flushed with anger. “Have the army in the city prepare! I will make the Great Yu Empire pay a price!”

With that, he led his personal guards towards the pier.

At sea, the Great Yu Empire warships were heading towards Suwon City harbor. Among them, the two leading warships were slightly different from the others.

Because a towering mast extended from the center of these warships, continuously emitting black smoke.

Compared to other warships, these two warships appeared to move effortlessly at sea, their speed much faster than the others.

“General, that’s Suwon City harbor ahead. Japan transports the wealth plundered from Goryeo back to Japan through this harbor,” Liu Chen said, pointing at the harbor filled with Japanese merchant ships and warships. By his calculation, Japan had occupied southern Goryeo for two years.

In these two years, Japan had exerted its utmost effort in plunder, acquiring much grain, ore, and gold and silver. These items were then used by Japan to purchase firearms.

It was even rumored that British ships transported supplies to Japan from the other side of the ocean.

For this, Yue Yun had once dispatched warships to search, but searching for the enemy in the vast ocean with only the naked eye was an almost impossible task.

"If it weren't for the war with the barbarians, His Majesty would have already taken this place. Japan has been allowed to benefit for two years in vain." For the Great Yu Empire generals, Goryeo was now the Great Yu Empire's backyard, not to be touched by others.

With that, he put away his telescope, his expression stern. "Prepare the cannons. The blockade of Goryeo's south coast begins here."

"Yes, General."

Liu Chen responded, immediately signaling the flagman. Then the fleet began to change formation, and fifty-two warships pressed in a circular formation towards the harbor.

Yue Yun and Liu Chen's steam warships led the way. When they were only three hundred meters from the harbor, they aimed their muzzles at the ships in the harbor.

Explosive shells with fuses were loaded into the muzzles one by one.

As they acted, the Japanese warships also moved. Japanese sailors on the Japanese Atakabune scurried about. The wooden planks on both sides of the ships flipped open, revealing dark cannon muzzles.

"This is truly astonishing." Yue Yun was surprised. The Great Yu Empire had been progressing over the years, but clearly Japan and Goryeo were also progressing. Firearms seemed to be spreading with the Great Yu Empire's foreign conquests, so much so that even Japanese warships now had cannons.

Liu Chen was also somewhat surprised. He said, "It seems this Japanese navy must be eliminated even more."

Yue Yun nodded and said coldly, "Fire!"

Following his command, the cannons on the warships fired shells one by one. Japanese soldiers, seeing this, instinctively sought cover.

But this time, they were wrong.

The shells striking their warships exploded with a "boom," instantly shattering wood and sending flames soaring into the sky.

Chapter 843

"Boom, boom, boom..."

The roar of cannons and the explosions of shells thundered in unison at the pier. Gunsmoke and flames became the background color of the pier.

The Great Yu Empire navy's circular formation continuously fired deadly shells. Unlike solid shot, a few shots of the new shells were often enough to sink a Japanese warship.

Amidst the explosions, many Japanese warships successively sank.

Yue Yun was also shocked by the scene before him. Although he knew these new shells would change naval warfare, the actual effect still surprised him somewhat.

“General, now the Japanese navy can only take a beating from us.” Liu Chen’s eyes reflected flames and smoke. Not far away, Japanese soldiers who had fallen into the sea were everywhere on the surface.

They struggled in the water, their cries filled with fear. Although they were required to be absolutely loyal and brave in Japan, facing such a destructive blow, human nature still overrode their training.

Edo Ichiaki arrived at the pier and saw precisely this scene. The hellish sight made his body somewhat stiff.

Koizumi Junichi was the same. Now, he finally realized a problem: they had underestimated the Great Yu Empire’s strength.

Before attacking Goryeo, they had a detailed understanding of the Goryeo dynasty. They found that Goryeo heavily emphasized civil affairs over military affairs, which led to Goryeo’s army having very poor combat effectiveness.

And the samurai who had been at sea for years, having frequent contact with Goryeo people, reached the same conclusion.

It was precisely under this premise that Lord Yamada formally ordered the attack on Goryeo. However, they overlooked the Great Yu Empire. After all, Goryeo was then under the Golden Tent Khanate, and

the Golden Tent Khanate was busy with its war against the Great Yu Empire. They concluded that the Great Yu Empire would not interfere in Goryeo's war.

"Is this the Great Yu Empire's firearm?" Edo Ichiaki muttered to himself. His heart was clouded with gloom.

There was no doubt that Suwon City pier was finished. The Great Yu Empire's fleet had destroyed all ships in the pier. Next, they would prevent any ships from docking at Suwon City pier. Their supplies would be cut off, and they would also be unable to transport goods from Suwon City to their homeland.

It would not take long for the entire southern Goryeo to become an isolated island. The eighty thousand Japanese soldiers on the isolated island would be isolated and helpless.

"My Lord Flag-Leader, our navy is finished," Koizumi Junichi said, gripping his katana with his right hand, his knuckles white. He didn't know if it was due to anger or fear.

Edo Ichiaki remained silent for a long time. Looking at the burning pier, he shouted, "Order everyone to retreat into the city! The Great Yu Empire army will not wait too long. They will attack the city tomorrow at the latest. We must be fully prepared before then."

Koizumi Junichi nodded. He and Edo Ichiaki now clearly understood the disparity in firearms between them and the Great Yu Empire.

But this was not a reason for them to abandon resistance, because this war was not a melee between Japanese daimyo, but a war between Japan and the Great Yu Empire.

If they failed, they would surely be killed. They had no choice now.

After giving the order, Edo Ichiaki and Koizumi Junichi walked into the city, leaving behind the pier, red with flames.

At sea, Yue Yun and Liu Chen ordered a halt to the bombardment. All Japanese warships were destroyed. They did not want to continue wasting shells. After all, according to the military machinery department, these new shells were much more expensive than solid shot.

“General, where do we go now?” Liu Chen put down his telescope. They had confirmed that all warships in the harbor were destroyed.

Yue Yun unfolded the nautical chart. He pointed to the strait between Goryeo and Japan and said, “Next, we will blockade this area, preventing any Japanese warships from reinforcing the Japanese army in Goryeo.”

“Yes,” Liu Chen said, his face beaming. This battle was the most satisfying one he had ever fought.

Yue Yun was also excited. He looked towards Japan and said, “Mother, your son will soon avenge you.”

Suwon Bridge.

The rumbling of cannons also reached here. Ye Qingyun and Qu Dong exchanged smiles. They understood that the Great Yu Empire navy had arrived.

“Hehe, now I’d like to see where these Japanese pirates will run!” Ye Qingyun said triumphantly.

Qu Dong chuckled. “This Japan is too overconfident. According to the intelligence provided by the secret guards, Japan’s population, land, and industry and commerce are too far behind the Great Yu Empire. The only things they have that are presentable are their matchlock guns and the smoothbore flintlock guns taught by the British, and these are merely weapons we have already phased out.”

After a pause, he continued, “The knowledge from the military academy tells us that wars between two nations are more about competing national strengths. Undoubtedly, in this regard, Japan has already lost.”

Ye Qingyun showed an appreciative gaze. Qu Dong was one of the excellent students who graduated from this military academy. What they learned was almost entirely different from the past.

And many new theories were also surprising, but it had to be said, what they said made a lot of sense.

“You’re right. Japan is merely a tiny island nation. If this continues, that country’s basic necessities of life will all suffer. It was precisely because the Emperor saw through Japan’s inherent weakness that he decided to first challenge Japan, and then focus on dealing with the Prince of Chu. After all, the Prince of Chu is the wealthiest feudal lord in the Great Yu Empire.”

Qu Dong nodded, "We can end the war in Goryeo in just two months."

As the two were speaking, a commotion suddenly arose outside the camp. Then a soldier came to report, "Army Commander, the Goryeo army has arrived."

Ye Qingyun let out a slight breath of relief. Fighting on Goryeo soil, the role of cannon fodder would naturally be borne by Goryeo.

Although these Goryeo troops were mere dregs to him, they could still be of some use with their help. At the very least, they could clear the battlefield, transport supplies, and assault cities with ladders.

"They arrived just in time. This King of Goryeo is quite sensible. Have them encamp in front of our camp," Ye Qingyun said. He and Qu Dong were very worried about Japanese pirates launching a night raid on the camp, but now, Japan probably wouldn't dare to risk it easily.

Otherwise, by daybreak, they would become lambs to be slaughtered.

Night gradually darkened. Seventy thousand Goryeo soldiers, wearing red armor and round helmets, began to set up camp.

This scene was discovered by Japanese scouts, and the news quickly reached Suwon City.

“Our soldiers stationed in Suwon City number only thirty thousand. Even a night raid would be tied down by the Goryeo army. By the time we break through the Goryeo soldiers’ camp, the Great Yu Empire army would have already assembled, and we would gain no advantage.” Edo Ichiaki slammed the table. He said, “Abandon the night raid. Immediately reinforce the city, and also immediately capture the Goryeo common people in the city to use as human shields.”

Koizumi Junichi nodded. He showed a hint of cruelty. For them, the Goryeo common people were no different from livestock.

However, capturing these Goryeo common people as human shields could indeed achieve good results.

After the order was given, screams soon echoed throughout Suwon City. Goryeo common people were driven out of their homes one by one by Japanese soldiers.

Chapter 844

When the eastern sky turned white, the reveille sounded in the Suwon Bridge Grand Camp.

In the camp, which stretched for ten li, Great Yu Empire soldiers and Goryeo soldiers both got up and began preparing their meals. Plumes of cooking smoke rose into the sky, stretching longer and longer in the faint light of dawn.

In this serene and beautiful scene, Ye Qingyun and Qu Dong emerged from the camp almost simultaneously.

In the camp, the bugle call was a military order. Both generals and soldiers had to obey it. This was the iron discipline of the Great Yu Empire army; no one could be exceptional.

And in Suwon City, Edo Ichiaki had not slept all night. He looked with swollen eyes at the dense plumes of smoke in the distance. It wouldn't be long before the combined armies of the Great Yu Empire and Goryeo arrived outside Suwon City.

Here, they would have a formal confrontation with the Great Yu Empire's army.

Koizumi Junichi was also on the city wall. Behind him were Goryeo common people tied with ropes. After the war began, these common people would be pushed to the front to block the Great Yu Empire soldiers' bullets.

At the same time, the Japanese soldiers inside the city were cleaning their firearms. The vast majority of these soldiers held matchlock guns, while a smaller portion held flintlock guns.

Compared to the simple construction of matchlock guns, flintlock guns were more complex to manufacture. To date, only eight thousand flintlock guns had been produced.

Five thousand of these flintlock guns were equipped to Edo Ichiaki's army, to show Lord Yamada's high regard for him.

Precisely because of this, Edo Ichiaki dared not imagine the consequences of failure, because a defeat in war would bring immense pressure to Lord Yamada.

Other daimyo would seize this opportunity to oppose him.

The sun gradually rose, and the atmosphere of war grew heavier. Japanese soldiers lit torches and stood guard in front of the cannons, ready for battle at any moment.

And the elite five thousand flintlock gun soldiers were deployed by Edo Ichiaki on the East City wall. Directly opposite them was a wide, open rice field, and he believed the Great Yu Empire would launch its attack here.

Time passed bit by bit. Soon, the Japanese soldiers on the city wall saw the Goryeo army walking towards them.

These soldiers did not rush to attack the city. Instead, they walked around the city in an orderly manner, besieging Suwon City.

This scene greatly surprised Edo Ichiaki on the city wall.

Ye Qingyun and Qu Dong led the Great Yu Empire army to encamp in front of the official road of Suwon City's South City.

Qu Dong picked up his telescope and looked at the heavily guarded Japanese soldiers on the city wall. He said, "The Japanese pirates are brave but lack strategy. They are indeed as His Majesty said."

In the military course at the Son of Heaven's Academy, he had once asked His Majesty about the situation of the Japanese army. At that time, Xiao Ming had told him about this matter.

He believed that Japan was an extremely shortsighted country, always acting without considering the consequences. Its foreign strategy was not based on deep consideration but was like that of a gambler.

Once they decided on a plan, they would stake everything, until they were beaten to a pulp before becoming honest. And once they grew strong again, accumulating enough capital for gambling, they would try again.

The reason Japan had such characteristics was attributed to its geography. Japan's land was small and poor in resources. It always felt insecure about its living land, constantly longing for the vast and abundant Central Plains.

Ye Qingyun did not commit. He said, "Indeed, they are fools. Their supplies have been cut off. Why should we attack the city? Starving them is enough. Moreover, here we can lay siege and ambush reinforcements."

Qu Dong nodded. This was their plan. They would spread the news of Suwon City being besieged and wait for Japanese forces to come to its aid.

Then, they could easily defeat the Japanese army that came there.

Chapter 845

The scorching summer gradually passed, and the weather became slightly cooler.

But the atmosphere in Bowen Academy's machinery laboratory was as fiery as ever. After instructing Lin Wentao to build a lathe workshop, he rewarded all the students and artisans who participated in the manufacturing of high-precision lathes.

“The first batch of lathes will be delivered to the military machinery department. I am now waiting for their rifles.” For industry, the best things were always first used for military purposes.

In this timeline, this era, he still could not escape this fate.

Ever since he came here, time had not lingered for him: one year, two years, three years, until seven and eight years. He too had aged from eighteen to twenty-six.

Sometimes, waking from a midnight dream, he would also be startled. The impermanence of life would make even him, an emperor, feel fear. Precisely because of this, he cherished every day even more, trying his best to realize the technologies from the technology crystal.

Because this was not only for this nation, but also for himself, and also to unravel the mystery of this parallel timeline. What exactly caused the deviation of this world’s historical process?

Lin Wentao noticed the worry flashing in Xiao Ming’s eyes, but he dared not ask. Instead, he honestly replied, “Yes, Your Majesty.”

Nodding gently, Xiao Ming left Bowen Academy and, protected by his guards, turned three streets and arrived at Qingzhou Medical Academy.

While the military advanced rapidly, Xiao Ming did not forget the existence of the medical academy. In fact, he now attached increasing importance to it.

In this Northern Expedition, the medical academy dispatched many students to accompany the army. Precisely because of their presence, many soldiers were saved from having their lives cruelly taken by illness due to minor injuries.

“Your Majesty, your old servant is busy with experiments and did not come to greet you in time. I hope Your Majesty will forgive me.”

Upon entering the medical academy, Xiao Ming went directly to the laboratory. At this point, Huang Tingzhi was hastily walking out to greet him.

“Elder Huang, no need for formalities. I have always held you medical practitioners in high regard,” Xiao Ming said.

This trip to Bowen Academy, besides inspecting the lathes, Xiao Ming was also conducting regular inspections to check the condition of various academies in Qingzhou Province.

After arriving in Qingzhou Province, Huang Tingzhi gradually put away his arrogant heart, because the continuous influx of books into the medical academy suddenly made him, a medical practitioner, realize that he was merely a frog at the bottom of a well.

From then on, he began a more profound study of medical knowledge, and the emergence of the medical laboratory further provided them with this convenience.

“Your Majesty attaches such importance to the medical academy. This is truly fortunate for medical practitioners,” Huang Tingzhi said with emotion. In recent years, Qingzhou Province had provided many

pieces of equipment for the medical academy, and these equipment allowed them to make rapid progress in medicine.

Especially the recently provided rubber hoses. If not for this item, they would truly be unable to perform blood transfusions.

Besides rubber tubes, the medical academy now also had scalpels, forceps, sutures, and other medical tools. Coupled with the medical knowledge they had learned, they could now perform simple surgeries on patients.

“Providing equipment is naturally what the imperial court should do. Without your medical academy, soldiers on the battlefield would suffer more casualties,” Xiao Ming said.

As he walked, Xiao Ming continued, “In fact, I came here this time to discuss something with Elder Huang, and this matter also benefits the common people.”

“Please instruct, Your Majesty,” Huang Tingzhi said seriously.

“I want to establish the Qingzhou Hospital in Qingzhou Province.” Xiao Ming looked at Huang Tingzhi. He had this idea long ago, but it could not be established because previous medical practitioners only understood traditional Chinese medicine.

However, in the past three or four years, the students in the medical academy had gradually specialized through refined study. Besides traditional Chinese medicine, there were now also surgeons who wielded scalpels.

It was under such conditions that he decided to build a comprehensive hospital, and this was part of the Qingzhou City urban planning.

After explaining all the characteristics of the hospital to Huang Tingzhi, he said in surprise, "Your Majesty, this is excellent news! Many students have now achieved success in their studies and are wondering where to go. This hospital is perfect for them."

Xiao Ming nodded. He said it was a discussion, but in reality, it was merely an imperial order. The hospital was at a planning stage and had to be started quickly.

"Excellent. As for the arrangements for the students going to the hospital, I will rely on Elder Huang. After all, you understand the students in the academy better," Xiao Ming said.

"Your Majesty can rest assured. I, your old servant, will certainly not let ignorant individuals harm the common people," Huang Tingzhi said, gently stroking his beard.

After discussing this matter, the two arrived at the laboratory door. He said, "Elder Huang, I have one more matter here today."

Huang Tingzhi turned to Xiao Ming, awaiting his words.

“Over the past three or four years, Elder Huang must have gained a profound understanding of the human body and of life. So, taking this opportunity, I wish to establish another major in this medical academy: the School of Biology,” Xiao Ming said loudly.

Like astronomy, biology was another powerful tool to unveil the veil of ignorance. At the same time, it was a discipline that studied life.

In contemporary times, biology was also a core area of competition among various countries worldwide, its importance no less than any other major.

Xiao Ming proposing biology now was not out of whim, but because the time was ripe.

In the past few years, Huang Tingzhi and his colleagues had access to a large amount of medical knowledge, much of which was modern specialized knowledge.

Unlike machinery, which required an industrial foundation to climb step by step, Xiao Ming did not follow conventional progression. He directly introduced modern medical achievements to the medical academy.

Although many diseases could not be treated due to a lack of equipment, many students had now become proficient in pathology and pharmacology.

Now, the only thing needed was research into pharmaceutical manufacturing, and biopharmaceuticals were one such category. Therefore, establishing biology was also necessary.

Huang Tingzhi had already experienced observing cells and microorganisms using a microscope. So, after Xiao Ming explained what biology was, he did not object.

After all, he now understood that biology and medicine were closely related. He said, “Your Majesty, this is an honor for the medical academy. Although Your Majesty has given us much astonishing medical knowledge, we are still helpless against many diseases. We hope biology can provide us with more medicines.”

Xiao Ming smiled. In fact, he also had a selfish motive for this. The improvement of medical technology was key to extending human life.

In ancient times, the average lifespan was only forty or fifty years. He certainly did not want to die here from a disease that would be considered minor in contemporary times.

Having settled this matter, Xiao Ming felt a weight lift from his heart. The knowledge in the technology crystal was all-encompassing, including many things. While focusing on industry, he could not neglect other important knowledge.

Only when all knowledge advanced in parallel could the Great Yu Empire become increasingly perfect, without any shortcomings.

Chapter 846

The dark clouds hung low in the sky.

Coming out of the medical academy, a cold wind blew outside. It looked like a heavy rain was about to pour down.

Xiao Ming looked at the rapidly changing Qingzhou Province with a smile. Hard work paid off. Although almost eight years had passed in a hurry, the Great Yu Empire was now undergoing incredible changes in his hands.

Industry, medicine, chemistry, architecture—knowledge from the technology crystal was transforming the Great Yu Empire from a feudal dynasty into a modern nation.

However, for Xiao Ming, this was not enough, because for him, the Great Yu Empire still lacked its final unification.

Lin'an.

Li San was eating in a restaurant. Due to the influence of Qingzhou Province, stir-fried dishes had now spread throughout the Great Yu Empire. Many merchants in Lin'an purchased iron woks and cooking oil from Qingzhou Province, so restaurants now also offered stir-fried dishes.

"The appearance is there, but unfortunately, the taste is still lacking," Li San was somewhat dissatisfied with the restaurant's stir-fried dishes. For him, the taste was too far from Qingzhou Province.

A young man sitting opposite him said nothing. Instead, he silently looked at the grand procession outside the restaurant. This was the Prince of Chu's hunting party. Li Chuyuan's return seemed to not have disrupted the annual hunting day.

“Time to go!” Taking a bite of food, the young man said coldly, completely disregarding Li San as his superior.

Li San was used to the young man’s attitude. This young man was named Wang Hu. He came from a family of hunters and seemed to have a natural talent for firearms.

In a very short time after encountering firearms, he became the top assassin of the secret guards.

“Sigh, let’s go. It’s time to end this Prince of Chu’s life anyway. Even if we don’t kill him, the Cao family will kill him sooner or later,” Li San’s eyes gleamed with wisdom.

These past few days, he had had much contact with the secret guard members ambushed in the city. He had basically grasped the current situation in the State of Chu. It could be said that the changes happening here exceeded their predictions.

After days of analysis and reconnaissance, he basically held no hope for a peaceful recovery of the State of Chu, because even if the Prince of Chu died, they would still face the merchants’ council.

Because according to what they knew, besides inciting the Prince of Chu to open up private militias, the merchants’ council had also bribed some generals under the Prince of Chu. These generals all led new armies. From this, the merchants’ council’s sinister intentions were clearly evident.

From the very beginning of forming the merchants’ council, Cao Kun had decided to sideline the Prince of Chu and establish a country similar to Western systems.

Having paid the silver, Li San and Wang Hu left the restaurant. On the way to the Prince of Chu's royal hunting grounds, they had already made preparations. Now, they only needed to rush there.

Looking at the procession stretching for several li, and then at the hundred or so hunting dogs in the procession, Li San frowned. He had to admit that this Prince of Chu indeed put on a grand display, even grander than the Emperor's.

No wonder everyone said the State of Chu was the wealthiest under heaven.

Following the hunting party out of Lin'an City, Li San and Wang Hu quickly galloped towards the ambush point. Whether they could assassinate the Prince of Chu depended on this single attempt.

Half an hour later, the two arrived at a hillside. Then they led their horses into a forest and tethered them. They did this to prevent the horses from being discovered.

Then the two crossed the hill and ran towards another hill three li away. For caution, the previous location was not the ambush spot; that was the real ambush spot.

Upon reaching the designated position, a row of secret guard members, camouflaged with wild grass, suddenly stood up. They immediately helped Li San and Wang Hu disguise themselves.

The withered yellow grass quickly made the two blend with their surroundings. This time, for safety, Li San also put in a lot of effort, even using the camouflage techniques the Emperor had taught him.

In addition, they also carried smokeless gunpowder this time, precisely to avoid exposing themselves as much as possible.

Having completed their disguise, Wang Hu and Li San lay down. At this point, Wang Hu picked up the first breech-loading rifle manufactured by Song Changping.

Taking out a paper cartridge and placing it beside him, Wang Hu calibrated the aiming scope, then licked his finger to test the wind direction and strength.

This sniping knowledge came from the information provided by the imperial palace.

Besides Wang Hu, the other twenty ambushing secret guard members carried Conqueror Muskets. To ensure a successful assassination, they would launch a second wave of firing if Wang Hu failed.

Of course, for Li San, he hoped there would be no second time.

All preparations complete, Li San then saw through his telescope the Prince of Chu's entourage walking along the mountain road.

Two quarters of an hour later, the hunting party entered their firing range.

At this moment, Wang Hu's eyes suddenly became like an eagle's. His gun muzzle slowly moved, aiming at the Prince of Chu, who was surrounded by everyone in the middle.

For concealment, and for their own safety, their position this time was three hundred meters from the Prince of Chu.

At this time, the Prince of Chu was completely unaware that the gate of death had opened for him. Li Chuyuan's return had made him somewhat agitated.

For him, any decision by Xiao Ming made him annoyed. Perhaps only hunting could make him forget his current troubles.

Looking at the scenery on both sides, the Prince of Chu let out a soft breath. Suddenly, he saw a flash of light in the distant grass.

This light was similar to the sun shining on glass. In an instant, the Prince of Chu's body stiffened. Instinct told him he should dodge immediately.

But before he could react, he saw a flash of fire from the grass on the distant hill. Then he felt a sharp pain in his forehead and immediately lost consciousness.

After all this happened, the sound of gunfire only then reached them.

"Assassins! Assassins!"

Blood gushed from the Prince of Chu's forehead. He slowly fell from his horse. For a time, the entire hunting party fell into chaos.

The guards protecting the Prince of Chu quickly galloped towards the hillside three hundred meters away. At this point, they saw a group of people covered in grass stand up and quickly flee to the other side of the hill.

This assassination plan was meticulously planned. Li San naturally left himself a retreat route. Below the hill, someone had already prepared horses and was waiting for them.

Shedding their disguises along the way, they mounted their horses and fled according to the predetermined route towards Jinling Province.

"Wang Hu, well done! That shot hit the Prince of Chu squarely on the forehead. He can't possibly still be alive!" Li San said excitedly. This time, he had something to report to the Emperor.

He would no longer lose to Wang Xuan in terms of merit.

Wang Hu remained silent, his face unperturbed, as if the assassination had nothing to do with him. However, the excitement in his eyes still betrayed him.

The Prince of Chu's guards pursued relentlessly, but by the time they reached the ambush site, there was no trace of the assassins.

They looked at each other, then scattered in disarray.

Now that the Prince of Chu was dead, even a fool knew that the State of Chu was about to change. Whether to follow the merchants' council or Li Chuyuan, they now had to choose.

As for the Prince of Chu, who would still care about a dead man?

Chapter 847

"Father King! Father King! Who was it? Who did it?"

Li Chuyuan in the Prince of Chu's residence looked utterly heartbroken, but the coldness deep in his eyes betrayed his true feelings at this moment.

When his father put him under house arrest for the merchants' council, their father-son relationship had already fractured.

For years, his father had been an obstacle preventing him from gaining power. Now, that obstacle had finally disappeared.

Of course, he also guessed who assassinated his father. In the world today, only that Emperor in the north could do it.

At this moment, he finally understood what Xiao Ming had said in the imperial study.

“Your Highness, now is not the time for sorrow. His Highness the Prince of Chu has passed away, but the State of Chu still needs someone to inherit. Your Highness, as the legitimate eldest son, should inherit the Prince of Chu’s throne.”

When the Prince of Chu’s corpse returned to Lin’an City, all the various forces in Lin’an City stirred. For them, every change of the Prince of Chu was a moment to re-evaluate their allegiance.

The minister who spoke was Sima Hao, Li Chuyuan’s maternal uncle. As the foremost powerful family in Lin’an, almost every generation of the Prince of Chu would choose to intermarry with the Sima family.

It was also because of the Sima family’s existence that Li Chuyuan’s position among the princes was as stable as Mount Tai.

“Uncle, it must have been the Cao family. The merchants’ council has coveted the power of the State of Chu for a long time. Now, they can no longer hold back,” Li Chuyuan said, almost gritting his teeth.

Sima Hao looked confident. He said, “The State of Chu’s gentry have long been dissatisfied with the merchants’ council. They will support us, but before that, you must inherit the Prince of Chu’s throne, so that we have a legitimate cause.”

Li Chuyuan nodded fiercely. How could he tolerate an uncontrollable force emerging within his own territory?

After a pause, he continued, “Those two Frenchmen are no good either. If not for their incitement, Father King wouldn’t have trusted the Cao family so much. Uncle, you should execute the two of them immediately.”

Sima Hao nodded. They could cooperate with merchants in trade, but they absolutely could not tolerate the Cao family coveting power.

Pacing back and forth, Li Chuyuan gritted his teeth and made another decision. He said, "Uncle, to ensure foolproof success, we should now seek help from Xiao Ming, to leave ourselves a glimmer of hope."

Sima Hao deeply agreed. If it had been before, he naturally wouldn't have paid any mind to the Cao family. But now, the merchants' council, led by the Cao family, had grown too quickly.

He had just received news that the moment the Prince of Chu's death was confirmed, three fire-arm battalions stationed outside Lin'an City, totaling nine thousand men, all defected. They protected Cao Kun and Cao Zhengtong as they headed towards Suzhou.

"The Cao family has planted countless secret agents in the State of Chu over the past few years. I suspect the merchants' council not only controls these few firearm battalions but perhaps even more. At this moment, we truly need to show weakness to Xiao Ming," Sima Hao said thoughtfully.

Li Chuyuan said, "If that's the case, I will immediately write a letter and send it to Qingzhou Province."

With that, he had someone bring paper and brush and meticulously recorded the current situation in the State of Chu.

At the same time, upon learning of the Prince of Chu's death, Cao Kun and Cao Zhengtong immediately fled Lin'an City with their families.

They knew very well what the consequences would be if they continued to stay in Lin'an. After all, Lin'an was firmly controlled by the Sima family, and their own power was very weak.

"Father, once Li Chuyuan inherits the throne, he will surely target the Cao family. We have endured for so long; it's time to act, otherwise, the Great Yu Empire will no longer have a place for us," Cao Zhengtong said, looking towards Lin'an City, his heart filled with unwillingness.

In the carriage, Cao Kun sat opposite Cao Zhengtong. At this moment, he had his eyes closed. After hearing Cao Zhengtong's words, he slowly said, "What's the rush? For these past few years, we've exhausted our financial resources to establish the merchants' council. How can a boy like Li Chuyuan, who hasn't even grown his hair yet, deal with that? As for the Sima family, they are merely old-fashioned antiques who stick to old rules. They are powerful in Lin'an, and we cannot defeat them. But to be our opponents, they are not qualified."

After a pause, he said, "Once we reach Suzhou, we will immediately take control of the new army and recruit soldiers. Then, defeating those disobedient powerful families will be a simple matter."

Cao Zhengtong nodded. Prince Wei, until his death, never knew that Fan Zilong, the current Governor-General of Suzhou, was already their man. Most importantly, this Governor-General commanded precisely the new army recruited in the past two years.

With this new army equipped with firearms, they were not at all worried about any trouble Li Chuyuan might stir up. Their only concern was Xiao Ming in the north.

While Lin'an was in turmoil, the instigator, Li San, and his subordinates fled all the way.

Four days later, they arrived at Jinling Province. After staying there for several days, it took another four days for them to return to Qingzhou Province.

"So, the Prince of Chu is dead?"

In the imperial study, Xiao Ming stopped writing. He was writing about penicillin, which was all for biology.

"Yes. We even sent someone to Lin'an to confirm when we were in Jinling Province. The Prince of Chu is indeed dead. Now, Li Chuyuan and the Sima family control Lin'an City. The Cao family has gone to Suzhou. Now, both sides are gathering forces, preparing for war," Li San said.

A faint smile appeared on Xiao Ming's lips. The situation had finally become interesting. He said, "Then let them fight."

Li San was startled for a moment. He said, "Your Majesty, are we not sending troops south now?"

"It's not time yet. These two factions, one representing powerful families and the other ambitious capital, are both a headache for me. Even if I march south now and defeat them, it will leave hidden dangers. Rather than that, it's better to let both sides suffer mutual destruction. This way, the south I receive will be a clean land, free of powerful families and ambitious capital," Xiao Ming said with a smile.

“Your Majesty is right, but in my humble opinion, this Li Chuyuan may not be a match for the Cao family,” Li San said with some concern. “If the Cao family controls the south, it could be troublesome.”

Xiao Ming chuckled, “Do you think I would give them this opportunity?”

As the two were speaking, Qian Dafu suddenly entered with a letter. He said, “Your Majesty, Li Chuyuan’s letter has arrived.”

Xiao Ming was in a good mood today. He took the letter from Qian Dafu and, after reading it, said to Li San, “Li Chuyuan is asking me for help. Since that is the case, I can only make war profits again. Isn’t this Li family as rich as a nation? I will first empty the Li family’s silver and then march south to deal with them.”

Li San helplessly shook his head. He basically understood the Emperor’s meaning now. In fact, because weapon innovation in Qingzhou Province was too rapid, the army now had a large accumulation of obsolete firearms. These firearms used to be real gold and silver, and simply letting them sit there was too wasteful.

Moreover, in the northern war, they had also captured many firearms. These firearms were worthless to them, but for Li Chuyuan, who urgently needed firearms now, it was different.

Chapter 848

Pang Yukun and Fei Ji walked side by side on the main road of Qingzhou Province leading to the imperial palace. They had just received an oral summons to enter the palace.

“Senior Grand Secretary Pang, I’m afraid His Majesty summoning us both to the palace this time is for the matter of reducing feudal lords’ power,” Fei Ji said, his hand in his sleeve, his face thoughtful.

When Qian Dafu relayed the oral decree, they both learned that the Prince of Chu had died. This was a huge shock to them, because it meant that the Great Yu Empire would face another upheaval.

Pang Yukun continuously frowned. “I think so too. The Prince of Chu is dead, and Li Chuyuan is busy fighting the merchants’ council. At this time, reducing the power of the Prince of Huainan and the Prince of Yong will not cause much commotion, let alone the weak Prince of Ruyang.”

Fei Ji nodded, “Heaven bless the Great Yu Empire. Now it seems that under His Majesty’s governance, the Great Yu Empire is finally going to end this fragmented situation. A unified Great Yu Empire will surely embark on the path of revival.”

Pang Yukun smiled, “Although that’s true, the task is still arduous and the road is long. The nation is now growing wealthy, but many officials’ old habits have returned. I’ve received quite a few impeachment memorials lately.”

Fei Ji’s face was a bit grim. He sighed and said, “The Great Yu Empire has developed too quickly. As a result, we cannot be selective enough with officials. To fill vacancies, we can only use old officials from before, alas, it’s truly a dilemma now.”

“Elder Fei is absolutely right. So now we can only rely on the Kong family to put effort into New Confucianism. As His Majesty said, punishing officials only treats the symptoms, not the root cause. Changing customs can eradicate the soil of corruption. All in all, this matter still requires a process.”

Fei Ji had been in official circles for many years and understood officials far more deeply than Pang Yukun. He said, "You are wrong about that. Do you truly believe that all officials sincerely believe in Confucianism? In fact, many officials merely use the banner of Confucianism to enhance their own reputation. Therefore, this time, when you and I enter the palace, we should also propose harsher punishments for corrupt officials to deter them."

"Good. The empire our Emperor painstakingly built cannot be destroyed in the hands of these people," Pang Yukun said, fully agreeing.

The two walked all the way to the imperial study. After bowing, they looked at Xiao Ming, awaiting his instructions.

"Li San just left. You must have also heard the news he brought. You two must have guessed why I summoned you. Now is the best time for me to reduce the power of the feudal lords. So, in tomorrow's court assembly, you must play along with me."

Scanning the two, Xiao Ming laid out his thoughts. As long as the Great Yu Empire was not unified, he, the Emperor, would be a crippled emperor. The Great Yu Empire would exist as a state within a state.

After a pause, he continued, "I have already given orders to the Grand Council. The armies prepared to guard against rebellions by the Prince of Huainan and the Prince of Yong are also ready. If the two remain stubborn, I will have no choice but to take harsh measures. For the unification of the Great Yu Empire, bloodshed is unavoidable."

Fei Ji and Pang Yukun's expressions turned grim. This time, they felt Xiao Ming's determination. From their perspective, the feudal lords were indeed a problem. For example, the Prince of Yong occupied regions rich in coal and iron mines in the north.

The coal and iron needed for Qingzhou Province's industry faced many restrictions when transported from Yong territory, which was very detrimental to the development of Great Yu Empire's industry and commerce.

"The State of Chu is preoccupied. Dealing with the Prince of Yong and the Prince of Huainan, we are more than capable," Pang Yukun said confidently. The continuous victories in warfare had made the officials in the court extremely confident now.

Fei Ji heard this and said, "Your Majesty, I believe that although we must reduce the power of the feudal lords, we should not do so too fiercely all at once. Otherwise, it will inevitably cause extreme dissatisfaction from the Prince of Huainan and the Prince of Yong. For now, it would be better to first reclaim military power, then political power, until the two princes become wealthy princes of their feudal states. As for their descendants, I believe they should be cared for within three generations. Only then can they be appeased."

Xiao Ming nodded, "That is what I was going to say. The Prince of Huainan and the Prince of Yong both rendered meritorious service to the nation during the northern war. I do not wish to fall out with them. Moreover, one is my in-law, and the other is my imperial uncle. So, tomorrow, proceed as you said and probe the reactions of the two."

"Yes, Your Majesty," Fei Ji said, bowing. In fact, he strongly supported the reduction of feudal lords' power. Whether from public or private interest, the Imperial Consort Cui Xue'er was always a major concern for him.

Moreover, recent rumors that Cui Xue'er was pregnant made him even more worried. If the feudal lords' power was reduced now, Cui Xue'er would lose the Prince of Huainan as her backing, and his daughter could then be on equal footing with Cui Xue'er, without having to worry about offending the Prince of Huainan.

After discussing the matter of reducing feudal lords' power, Xiao Ming turned to Pang Yukun and said, "This time, the State of Chu is in chaos. Li Chuyuan has asked me for help, requesting to purchase a considerable number of weapons and ammunition. You return with Niu Ben and inventory the military's reserves. Sell all the weapons that have been phased out by the army to him. This way, the silver earned can support the army in re-equipping with breech-loading rifles."

Pang Yukun loved arms trade the most. Hearing this, he was so happy he couldn't close his mouth. In the past, when feudal lords were in power, they relied on arms dealing to amass such a large fortune.

Recalling the good old days, he felt a pang of nostalgia. Now, he could finally openly sell arms again.

However, he still had doubts. He couldn't help but ask, "Your Majesty, if we sell these firearms to Li Chuyuan, and he wins in the future, won't we suffer more casualties when we attack him again?"

Xiao Ming shook his head, "Senior Grand Secretary Pang, you have miscalculated. Moreover, the silver earned from arms trade will promote the development of weapons and industry. In the long run, this will only benefit the war. For example, if we invest forty million taels of silver into industry and commerce, it is enough for the Great Yu Empire's industry and commerce to grow in one year by an amount that would normally take two, or even three years."

Pang Yukun suddenly understood. He had only seen the disadvantages in small matters, but had not seen the benefits in larger ones. This time, he had been shortsighted.

"I understand," Pang Yukun nodded.

After assigning these two tasks, Xiao Ming dismissed the two. He continued to record various knowledge from the technology crystal.

With the development of the Great Yu Empire's industry and the improvement of its education level, the knowledge of the 18th and 19th centuries was no longer sufficient for current needs.

Therefore, he was now preparing a second generation of books. These books would contain richer knowledge, and some would even delve into depths comparable to contemporary university level.

After all, the Great Yu Empire's industrial level was now firmly in the 19th century. At this level of industrialization, he needed to refine more knowledge to ensure the Great Yu Empire's comprehensive development in industry, medicine, chemistry, and other fields.

At the same time, he was also preparing to establish an imperial library. He would place some core materials there to assist various research laboratories in the Great Yu Empire.

Chapter 849

Suwon City.

It had been besieged for half a month. Now, the grain and fodder within the city had been exhausted. Without resupply, all the soldiers would starve to death.

"My Lord Flag-Leader, the soldiers can't hold out any longer," Koizumi Junichi said anxiously on the city wall. Due to hunger, several food-related riots had occurred in the army today.

Edo Ichiaki was observing the army outside the city. In these fifteen days, these soldiers had not been idle.

They had dug several rings of trenches around the city. All Goryeo soldiers entered the trenches, prepared to wear them down to the very end.

This scene made Edo Ichiaki despair. With the cover of the trenches, it would be even more difficult for them to break through this encirclement.

As he was troubled, a dense sound of gunshots suddenly came from the official road south of the city. At this moment, Edo Ichiaki fell silent.

He understood. These were reinforcements from other cities. In the past half month, six batches of reinforcements had arrived successively, but they were all defeated by the Great Yu Empire army already ambushed here. If this continued, the Japanese army in the south would be annihilated.

Although he was anxious, he had no recourse. He could do nothing now.

Just as he guessed, outside the city, Ye Qingyun was commanding his musketeers in a fierce battle against the arriving Japanese army reinforcements.

On the official road, both sides formed neat ranks and exchanged fire. Leveraging the advantage of range, Ye Qingyun always chose to preempt the enemy.

This time, he did not choose the hundred-and-fifty-meter range, but launched an attack from two hundred meters.

They had gained experience at Suwon Bridge. To prevent both sides from falling into close-quarters combat, he chose to inflict heavy casualties on the enemy from a long distance.

At the same time, the artillery used grapeshot. The dense firepower made Japanese soldiers fall like cut wheat.

Often, by the time Japanese soldiers entered their effective range, their formation had already been largely destroyed.

After half an hour of fierce fighting, the over six thousand strong reinforcement force finally collapsed, retreating along the official road.

At this point, a loud bugle call suddenly sounded, and five thousand cuirassiers, brandishing their sabers, chased after the fleeing Japanese soldiers.

Under the cavalry's pursuit, Japanese soldiers fell one after another. Soon, the reinforcing army was completely annihilated.

Ye Qingyun observed the battlefield situation, then smiled. On the fourth day of their siege of Suwon City, five thousand cuirassiers, arriving from Jinzhou, reinforced them.

The arrival of these cavalry truly made the battlefield the Great Yu Empire's stage. Japan, lacking cavalry, was in a very sorry state against them.

After the ambush ended, Ye Qingyun had Qu Dong count the casualties. Just like the previous times, they had only nine soldiers wounded in this battle, with no fatalities.

The advantage of firearms made their engagement with the Japanese army exceptionally easy.

“It seems we overestimated Japan. The Japanese soldiers this time still used matchlock guns. Flintlock guns are only sparsely equipped in Japan, and they are even further behind in artillery. They have no artillery that can contend with us.” Qu Dong’s eyes narrowed.

Ye Qingyun said, “I have already sent back a battle report regarding the engagement with the Japanese army to Qingzhou Province. His Majesty will have a direct understanding of the Japanese army to formulate the next Japanese strategy. But in my opinion, once our domestic situation is settled, we should deal with Japan. It is said that Japan has many silver and gold mines.”

At this point, Ye Qingyun chuckled mischievously.

Qu Dong helplessly shook his head. He looked at Li Cheng-jae, who was still dazed. He had arrived with the Great Yu Empire’s cavalry, and his army, which he had formed in Haigucheng, also came with him.

At the current pace, they could reclaim southern Goryeo in just over a month. By then, they would face the problem of who to hand southern Goryeo over to.

So, at this point, Ye Qingyun called Li Cheng-jae over. According to the Emperor's order, southern Goryeo would no longer be handed over to the King of Goryeo but would be governed by Li Cheng-jae. A unified Goryeo did not align with the Great Yu Empire's current interests.

Currently, their goal was to divide Goryeo in two. In the future, they would divide Goryeo again, restoring the map of the Han Four Commanderies from the Han Dynasty, and ultimately completely incorporating the assimilated Goryeo into the Great Yu Empire's territory.

And the King of Goryeo, in this situation, would no longer be the King of Goryeo, but would be reduced to a mere prefectural governor. This would make it easier for them to rule Goryeo.

"Li Cheng-jae, six successive batches of Japanese reinforcements have been crushed. The remaining Japanese forces will probably not be many. So, the task of reclaiming southern Goryeo now depends on you. We can only provide you with necessary assistance," Qu Dong slowly began.

Li Cheng-jae snapped back to reality. After Ye Qingyun took control of Haigucheng, he formulated a plan for Li Cheng-jae to take over the south.

During this time, he had been recruiting and buying soldiers. Ye Qingyun even provided him with many flintlock guns, and also dispatched generals to train this army of fifteen thousand men, all for today.

"Yes, Division Commander Qu." Li Cheng-jae was somewhat worried, and also ecstatic. The humiliation he suffered in Ryukyo City made him desperately eager to gain power.

Ye Qingyun nodded at this point. He said, "Depart with your army. In a month, I want to see a southern Goryeo without Japanese soldiers."

Li Cheng-jae nodded heavily. He shouted an order and set off southward along the official road.

Looking at the gradually receding Li Cheng-jae, Qu Dong said, "Is His Majesty not afraid of raising an ingrate?"

"You're wrong about that. Do you think this army truly listens to Li Cheng-jae? Don't forget, the generals of this army are all selected and trained by us. Some of these generals are not Goryeo people at all, but Great Yu Empire people who were previously captured by Goryeo and enslaved here. They were meticulously chosen by the secret guards and remain loyal to the Great Yu Empire."

Qu Dong understood. At this point, he looked at Suwon City and said, "Army Commander, it's Suwon City's turn now. After taking this place, Japan's main force in Goryeo will be completely annihilated."

Ye Qingyun thought for a moment. According to his understanding, Suwon City's grain and fodder would last at most half a month.

He said, "Wait a little longer. We need to force them out. After all, these thirty thousand men are Japan's elite this time; they cannot be underestimated."

Qu Dong nodded. Desperate struggles were still very dangerous.

As his words fell, the city gate of Suwon City suddenly opened. Japanese soldiers rushed out, shouting, towards the trenches.

Ye Qingyun and Qu Dong exchanged glances. Qu Dong said, "I didn't expect them to give in so quickly. Perfect. We can solve them once and for all today."

With that, he immediately had the bugler sound the horn.

The Great Yu Empire soldiers, who had just finished a battle, immediately reassembled. They loaded their bullets, held their Conqueror Muskets high, and slowly advanced towards the Japanese army in Suwon City.

Chapter 850

Edo Ichiaki raised his katana high and roared.

The Japanese soldiers in Suwon City, under his command, desperately charged from the city towards the Goryeo soldiers in the trenches.

This was their last desperate struggle. Success or failure depended on this one action. If they won, they might be able to return to Japan, but if they lost, they would be buried in southern Goryeo.

Facing the frenzied Japanese soldiers, the Goryeo soldiers in the trenches gripped their weapons tightly. They were scared now, but they were more afraid of the Great Yu Empire soldiers standing behind them.

Without their command, they could only fight to the death. Fortunately, the trenches prevented the Japanese soldiers from using their matchlock guns.

Now, they could only use their firearms as clubs.

After a fierce charge, the two armies finally clashed. Goryeo soldiers raised their swords and fought fiercely with the Japanese soldiers.

Eighty thousand against thirty thousand, the entire battlefield was immediately filled with curses, wails, and screams.

Ye Qingyun and Qu Dong led their troops in formation behind the trenches. They observed the battle situation, ready to support the Goryeo army at any time.

“It seems we don’t need to act,” Qu Dong concluded. The Japanese army, besieged for half a month, was clearly in disarray now.

At this point, they seemed more driven by instinct for survival than by a method for killing the enemy.

After contact, although the Japanese soldiers were very brave, they suffered heavy casualties against an enemy several times their number.

Many Japanese soldiers who entered the trenches never came out again. Conversely, the Goryeo soldiers fought with increasing vigor. Some soldiers even climbed out of the trenches to engage the Japanese soldiers in bloody combat.

Ye Qingyun nodded, "We might have overestimated the amount of grain and fodder in the city. These Japanese soldiers are probably starving for days. Although they look fierce, it's just a last burst of energy."

Just as the two said, the Japanese army was indeed hungry and exhausted. Edo Ichiaki could no longer control the chaos in the army, which was why he issued the order to charge out of the city and fight to the death.

However, just as he thought, the outcome of the war was already determined.

"Kill!"

Suddenly, roars echoed from the trench positions. The Goryeo soldiers, their morale greatly boosted after gaining the upper hand, charged towards the city under the leadership of their generals.

Losing southern Goryeo had always been a humiliation in the hearts of these generals. Now that they had found an opportunity for revenge, they were even fiercer than the Great Yu Empire's army.

"These bastards!"

Edo Ichiaki almost ground his teeth. He knew the Goryeo soldiers' nature well. When they plundered the Great Yu Empire's coast, the Goryeo people, disguised as pirates, were even more ferocious than they were.

They were like vicious dogs. Once they found a master, they would, emboldened by their master's authority, commit even crueler acts than their master.

Koizumi Junichi gripped the katana at his waist. He said, "My Lord Flag-Leader, let me fight alongside you one last time."

Edo Ichiaki sighed to the sky. In just two years, Goryeo's situation had rapidly deteriorated, all because of the Great Yu Empire.

Now, he was not worried about the defeat in Goryeo, but about the future fate of his country.

"Kill..."

The sounds of battle grew closer. Edo Ichiaki then drew his katana. He and Koizumi Junichi descended the city wall and joined the melee.

Outside the city, Ye Qingyun then issued the order to advance. They now had a complete advantage and there was no need to wait any longer.

Time was precious for them. They did not want to waste any more time on Suwon City. After all, there were still many things awaiting them.

Eight thousand musketeers joined the battle, and the scales of war further tilted towards the Great Yu Empire. They were like tigers entering a flock of sheep. Wherever they went, Japanese soldiers scattered and fled.

Following the Goryeo soldiers, they charged into the city. The eight thousand men sometimes formed squads to fire, and at other times raised their bayonet-fixed firearms to fight the Japanese soldiers.

The Great Yu Empire's firearms were already formidable. Coupled with the soldiers' skilled bayonet techniques, ordinary Japanese soldiers were no match at all. Only some samurai could fight for a few rounds with Great Yu Empire soldiers.

Facing the Great Yu Empire's brutal fighting style, the already disorganized Japanese soldiers faltered even more, suffering heavy casualties.

Soon, the war became one-sided.

The fighting continued from noon until night. When the last ray of sunset disappeared, the Great Yu Empire soldiers planted their dragon flag on the city wall of Suwon City.

"Army Commander, the body of Suwon City's flag-leader, Edo Ichiaki, has been found. And we also captured the samurai Koizumi Junichi, who was with him. At that time, he was preparing to commit seppuku."

Night fell. Qu Dong reported the day's battle results to Ye Qingyun.

“Seppuku?” Ye Qingyun showed a playful expression. He said, “Bring him in. It’s not too late for him to commit seppuku after he returns to Japan. I have a message for their Lord Yamada to deliver.”

“Yes, Army Commander.” Qu Dong left. Soon after, he brought in a disheveled Koizumi Junichi.

Glancing at Koizumi Junichi, Ye Qingyun said bluntly, “Your flag-leader Edo Ichiaki was also a hero. I can allow you to take his body back to Japan. However, when you return, give Yamada a message: tell him this is just the beginning. If he is sensible, he should learn from the King of Goryeo and submit to the Great Yu Empire early. Otherwise, Edo Ichiaki’s today will be his tomorrow.”

After Ye Qingyun finished speaking, the translator conveyed the words to Koizumi Junichi.

At this moment, Koizumi Junichi was distraught. Everything that happened on the battlefield today made him clearly understand the disparity between Japan and the Great Yu Empire’s army.

The Great Yu Empire was now strong, not the weak nation they used to think they could easily mock.

And as samurai, they inherently revered the strong.

So, when Ye Qingyun spoke, his heart was filled only with awe.

"I will convey your words to Lord Yamada," Koizumi Junichi said solemnly. He understood that returning meant death for him.

But he had to tell Lord Yamada everything he had seen in Goryeo. This was the responsibility of a samurai.

Ye Qingyun nodded in satisfaction. Waving his hand, he dismissed Koizumi Junichi.

After Koizumi Junichi's figure disappeared, Ye Qingyun said to Qu Dong, "Suwon City has fallen. Japan has failed in southern Goryeo. Next is the complete recovery of southern Goryeo. Tomorrow, you will lead a contingent to continue southward and assist Li Cheng-jae in taking southern Goryeo as soon as possible. Currently, domestic grain and mineral resources are not very abundant, and His Majesty hopes that Goryeo will soon provide various supplies to the homeland."

Qu Dong's body immediately straightened. In their hearts, Xiao Ming was not only their Emperor but also the dean of the military academy.

For them, Xiao Ming's orders were sacred and inviolable. This was recognized by every student who graduated from the military academy.

Having finished this matter, Ye Qingyun began to carefully study the map of Japan. From ancient times until now, the Central Plains army had never set foot in Japan.

Perhaps he could become that precedent.